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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 002421

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [XA](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA SECURITY AND STABILITY ASSESSMENT

REF: A. (A) ABUJA 2347

[1](#)B. (B) SECSTATE 162454

Classified by CDA Tim Andrews for reasons 1.5 (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The likelihood of ethnic or religious unrest in Nigeria in the wake of an eventual U.S. response to the September 11 acts of terror is high. Such unrest would not necessarily be targeted at American individuals or institutions, but American lives and property could be at risk. Tensions here remain elevated following recent events in Jos (Ref. A) and Wukari. Demonstrations--either in favor of or opposing U.S. military actions--could spark renewed ethno-religious fighting, especially in the Middle Belt, but potentially almost anywhere. Major Muslim religious leaders here have unequivocally condemned the attacks on the U.S. However, many Muslims will be angered over any U.S. reprisal attack that affects fellow Muslims, especially if there are significant civilian casualties. Some Muslims can be expected to stage protests, as they did during the Gulf War and following our reprisals for the Embassy bombings in 1998. The GON is willing to protect U.S. diplomats and installations in Abuja and Lagos, but its ability to do so is not unlimited. Outside of Abuja and the Lagos Islands, the GON's means of controlling civil unrest are even less robust. Recently, the GON has managed to quell serious unrest in Jos only with the assistance of the military, and then after a substantial loss of life. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Nigeria, independent of events in the U.S., has just suffered another paroxysm of ethno-religious conflict, this time in normally peaceful Jos (Ref. A). There is always a potential for violent unrest in Nigeria in those places where there exist longstanding ethnic or religious disputes. In the past two years, Kaduna, Abia, Lagos, Nassarawa, Bauchi, Taraba and now Plateau States have witnessed civil unrest of varying degrees that has resulted in a substantial number of deaths and sometimes provoked reprisals elsewhere. Many Nigerians and expatriates believe that recent violence in Jos was exacerbated by the terror attacks in the U.S. Whether that assessment is accurate or not is almost immaterial; the fact that it is so widely believed creates a potential danger. Protests over U.S. reprisal attacks could spark a new round of fighting, there or elsewhere.

[1](#)3. (C) The most likely venues for large-scale protests in the North would be Kano, Gusau, in Zamfara State and Kaduna and Zaria in Kaduna State. Protests could also materialize in other places, including Jos, Suleja or Abuja. With political jockeying toward the 2002 and 2003 electoral cycles underway, members of one party could accuse supporters of another of having organized an anti-American protest in order to discredit the second party. There have already been several apparently fictitious reports in Nigerian and international media (septel).

[1](#)4. (C) We believe GON security forces would be able to contain any demonstration within the parts of Abuja frequented by official Americans. The potential for civil unrest in response to a U.S. reprisal is highest in Kano because it is the largest predominantly Muslim city in the country, and is home to local and transnational Muslim radicals who may try to incite crowds to protest a USG military action. After fuel-price demonstrations 15 months ago left several dead, the Kano State Government, in conjunction with the Emir of Kano, the National Police Force and the SSS, has worked successfully to prevent large-scale demonstrations and their associated violence. It is unclear, however, that they would be able to prevent, or to control, a spontaneous demonstration in the Old City of Kano in response to U.S. retaliation.

[1](#)5. (C) The Old City could easily produce a spontaneous protest numbering in the tens of thousands. USAID/ OTI is closing its office in Kano and turning over the lease and equipment to the African Development Foundation in conjunction with OTI closeout in Nigeria. The USAID/OTI Kano office was the target of peaceful protests by some Muslims after a Johns Hopkins family planning program met the

disapproval of local Imams. Even though it will no longer be a USAID facility after September 30, most Kano residents will not know that its status has changed. Moreover, ADF is also an entity of the USG. While this office is a good distance from the Old City, it could again become the target of protests, as it is the only institution identified with the USG north of Abuja. The British Council maintains a large premises in the Old City of Kano, and that building could be a target of protests.

16. (C) Gusau is a likely spot for anti-American protests, but at present there is only one American there, a priest. It is unlikely that the Zamfara state government would permit a protest that would target the Catholic church in Gusau, because Governor Sani does not want the public-relations problems that would ensue. However, political demonstrations in Gusau have sometimes turned violent there because of fierce political rivalries. Zaria, the capital of Islamic learning in Nigeria and home of the Nigerian Muslim Brotherhood, would likely see some protests centered on Ahmadu Bello University. There is at least one AmCit in Zaria.

17. (C) While small protests in Sokoto are possible, there are few Americans who might be targeted. The Sultan of Sokoto has publicly condemned the terrorist attack on several occasions, and would likely work with Governor Bafarawa to prevent any large-scale protests there. While Kaduna could have small demonstrations, it is not likely to see large-scale protests, given its recent experience with devastating mob-violence. Seven local police stations have been built in the hotspots in and around Kaduna and are staffed with paramilitary Mobile Police, who would serve as a strong deterrent to any major protests. The recent violence in Jos, the devastating loss of life there and the continued presence of the military on the streets make it an unlikely venue for protests. Jos could re-ignite if fighting starts elsewhere and GON attention and resources are directed elsewhere; we are not confident that civil authorities can maintain order in Jos without military support at this time.

18. (C) The large, unplanned and often squalid urban communities outside Abuja could see demonstrations by Muslims. Since Abuja, like Jos and Kaduna, has an ethnically and religiously diverse population, protests here by Muslims could potentially spark violence driven by tensions over other, unrelated issues. Fortunately, Abuja is even more diverse than either Kaduna or Jos, so the potential for a community polarizing completely (most residents everybody taking one side or the other in a conflict) is lower.

19. (C) There are several institutions in Abuja identified with the USG, including the Embassy, USAID's offices and the American School. The USAID building and the Sheraton and Hilton hotels (where most American visitors stay) are all within walking distance of the National Mosque, and could possibly see protests. However, protests flowing from the National Mosque have, in the past, been peaceful and remained in the close vicinity of the Mosque. There are other Juma'at Mosques in Abuja, but we are not aware of any of them ever having been the focus or launch point of a protest in the past. The police maintain a strong presence in Abuja, and can be expected to protect U.S. diplomatic institutions. It is more likely that protests, and conflict, would originate in the densely-populated outlying residential districts, which we estimate have a collective population of over one million, mostly recent arrivals.

110. (C) While Nigerians or transnationals could try to attack U.S. installations or personnel in Nigeria, this has not happened yet. Short of a targeted attack, the greatest danger to Mission personnel in Abuja and Lagos, and Amcits generally, is crime and civil unrest. We met with Amcits in Kano and Abuja September 20 to discuss security issues, and are planning to meet with or contact remaining Amcits in the North and Middle Belt over the coming week. Funds permitting, Consulate Lagos will send consular officers to visit wardens Enugu, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Warri, and Ibadan next week, as well as providing an ACS officer to support Abuja's outreach and emergency preparedness efforts. There is no consular officer assigned to Abuja at this time. Abuja held a Town Meeting for local AmCits on Thursday, September 20.

111. (SBU) Both Embassy Abuja and Consulate Lagos have taken all necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of Mission personnel and assets. RSOs at both installations have requested and received increased support from the

Nigerian National Police and have held emergency preparedness briefings for all official Americans in the country. These briefings will expand next week to include the American schools in Lagos and Abuja. In Lagos, U.S. business representatives will also be briefed. RSOs constantly monitor security conditions in their areas and brief Mission management on any changes in the present security posture of Mission personnel and assets. RSOs at both installations have requested and received increased support from the Nigerian National Police.

12. (C) EACs in Abuja and Lagos are considering tripwires that might indicate a seriously deteriorating security environment and will report findings during the week of September 24. Nigeria's elite is strongly pro-American but there is a caveat in their support. Among our best contacts representing Nigeria's elite, there is universal condemnation of the attack. However, having expressed their condolences, many of our franker interlocutors -- human rights activists, lawyers, and journalists, for example, get around to adding that U.S. policy on certain international issues has engendered anti-U.S. sentiment in many parts of the world.
Andrews